

# Community Collaboration on Climate Change (C4)

By The C4 Planning Team  
March 23, 2021  
City Commission



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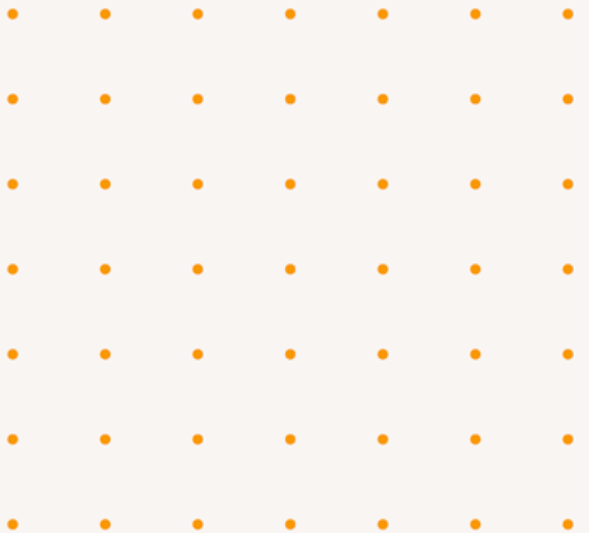
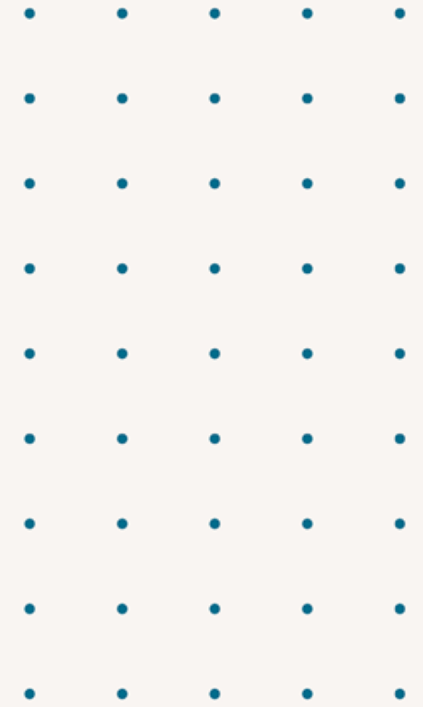
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# The Background



# Land Acknowledgment

We want to acknowledge that we are here on the beautiful ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe people, the People of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi.

We recognize the sovereignty of Michigan's Indigenous nations and historic communities – both those who live here now and those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands.

We want to express gratitude and appreciation to the Indigenous peoples across this continent who have been living and caring for this land from time immemorial, who are still here and will always continue to be present in this place.

## Current Events



The C4 Planning Team honors the realities of social circumstances that required remote engagement practices at the same time that many of the committee members were and still are actively engaged in Black Lives Matters and Movimiento Cosecha movements highlighting police brutality and racism in this country.

Climate change is both an immediate and hidden threat in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Its causes are integrated with extractive systems and policies based in capitalism and white supremacist culture which are intertwined with the complex solutions of racial equity. Black Lives Matter.

COVID-19 has highlighted disparities in health care and economic stability which will mirror negative impacts caused by climate change events.

- Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) are more **disproportionately negatively impacted** by climate change
- BIPOC **aren't authentically and consistently represented** in the current environmental and climate movement
- Grand Rapids lacks a **solid and stable infrastructure** to challenge systemic barriers necessary to make bold changes necessary for a just climate future
- Climate change is both urgent and long-term
- Lack of **awareness and understanding** surrounding climate change, diversity, equity, inclusion, and climate justice

## Problems



# Solutions



- **Provide resources directly to community members and activists of color** impacted by climate change to self-identify solutions
- **Redefine values and resources** in a give-take relationship between individuals and organization representatives
- Leverage a **stronger network** of organizations and community leaders to develop short-term and long-term strategies to increase impact
- Address **urgent and systemic** needs simultaneously
- Increase **awareness and understanding** of climate change, diversity, equity, inclusion and climate justice

The slide features a light gray background with abstract geometric shapes in orange, gray, and pink. On the left, there is a 5x7 grid of small blue dots. On the right, there is a 5x7 grid of small orange dots. The title 'C4 Vision Statement' is centered at the top in a dark blue font.

## C4 Vision Statement

Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and historically white environmental organizations will dismantle extractive systems and build new systems to address climate change - centered in human wellbeing, the interconnectedness of life, and access to shared leadership.



# Why build something new?

The Community Sustainability Partnership (CSP) was created in 2005 by the City of Grand Rapids and four major academic institutions to transform the greater GR region through collaboration, sharing of experiences, and mobilizing local resources to develop sustainable organizations, neighborhoods and communities. While the CSP achieved notable successes, including a United Nations University Regional Centre of Expertise designation, environmental injustices continue to persist in our community. A [2019 University of Michigan study](#) identified 5 GR census tracts in the top 10 in the state for having the most environmental injustice.

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Although we are all negatively impacted by climate change, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are disproportionately impacted and aren't genuinely represented in the current environmental and climate change movement. In addition, organizations and individuals that have been most active in the climate space are not connected in a way that will result in time sensitive communitywide improvements. Finally, Grand Rapids lacks a solid and stable infrastructure to challenge systemic barriers and make bold changes necessary to create a just climate future, and the C4 intends to change that fact.

# C4 Planning Team

Since August 2019, a group of City staff, community leaders, issues experts, and environmental advocates have been meeting to better define the C4, create infrastructure, establish an equity-focused process, and develop a plan to create and support the type of conceptual spaces needed for a climate-just Grand Rapids. The C4 Planning Team created the initial infrastructure for community participation, organizational collaboration, and the creation of a **climate justice movement** - a movement that combines discourse on climate change and environmental justice to perform actions to ensure all communities, especially those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, are treated equitably.

## Facilitation Support

With support from the Wege Foundation via an \$18,050 planning grant received in late 2019, the C4 Planning Team hired Team SRG (Anne Marie Hertl, Danny McGee, Wendy Schlett, Chelsea Glisson) as facilitators to foster continued relationship and trust building among team members and create infrastructure and a three-year plan to launch the C4's vision.

# Who was involved?

- Aaron Ferguson, Michigan Dept. of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)\*
- Alison Waske Sutter, City of Grand Rapids\*
- Ana Jose, West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Annabelle Wilkinson, City of Grand Rapids\*
- Ann Erhardt, Michigan State University (first phase only)\*
- Beca Velazquez – Publes, Urban Core Collective (UCC) (first phase only)\*
- Bill Wood, West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC)\*
- Carissa Patrone, West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum (WMSBF)
- Cheri Holman, U.S. Green Building Council – West Michigan (USGBC-WM)\*
- Gayle DeBruyn, Kendall College of Art and Design
- Jackie Hernandez, Healthy Homes Coalition (at the time)
- Kristen Trovillion, Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS; at the time)\*
- Kareem Scales, NAACP Grand Rapids
- Maeve Tropf, Steelcase\*
- Nichole Rafael, Westside Collaborative (at the time; first phase only)\*
- Nick Carlson\*
- Sarah Brant, Westside Collaborative (at the time)\*
- Sergio Cira-Reyes, Urban Core Collective (UCC)\*
- Stephanie Pierce, Grand Rapids African American Health Institute (GRAAHI; at the time)
- Synia E. Gant-Jordan, Legacy & Love LLC
- Wende Randall, Kent County Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF)
- Willie Patterson, LINC UP

\* Members involved in the first C4 Planning Team. That team concluded that the first C4 planning team was not diverse enough and did not represent our community (31% BIPOC). We added more members in September/October of 2019 (47% BIPOC).

# What did we create?

Momentum and Direction. Trusted Relationships.  
Infrastructure. 3-Year Pilot Plan. Equity-centered Processes.

The C4 Planning Team created the infrastructure needed to launch a 3-year pilot. This infrastructure includes a vision statement, values, community agreements and Leadership Team governance.

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We also sketched out a 3-year plan and accompanying budget to launch and pilot the C4.

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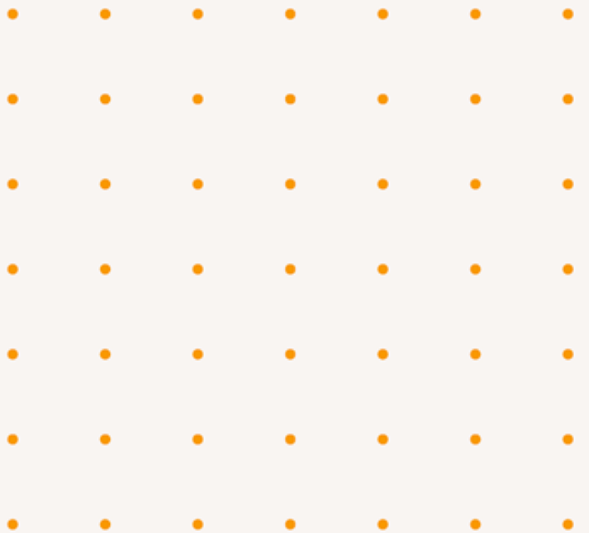
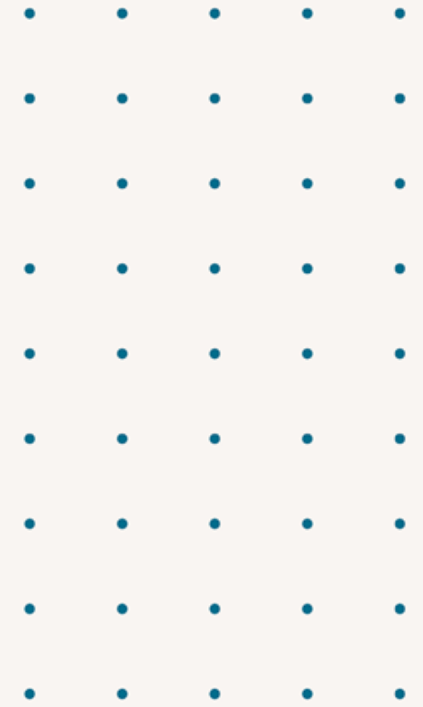
We are proposing new equity-centered processes that will generate new outcomes by focusing on equity-centered movement building, developing leaders, growing collaboration, sharing resources, and the iterative process of See/Engage/Act.

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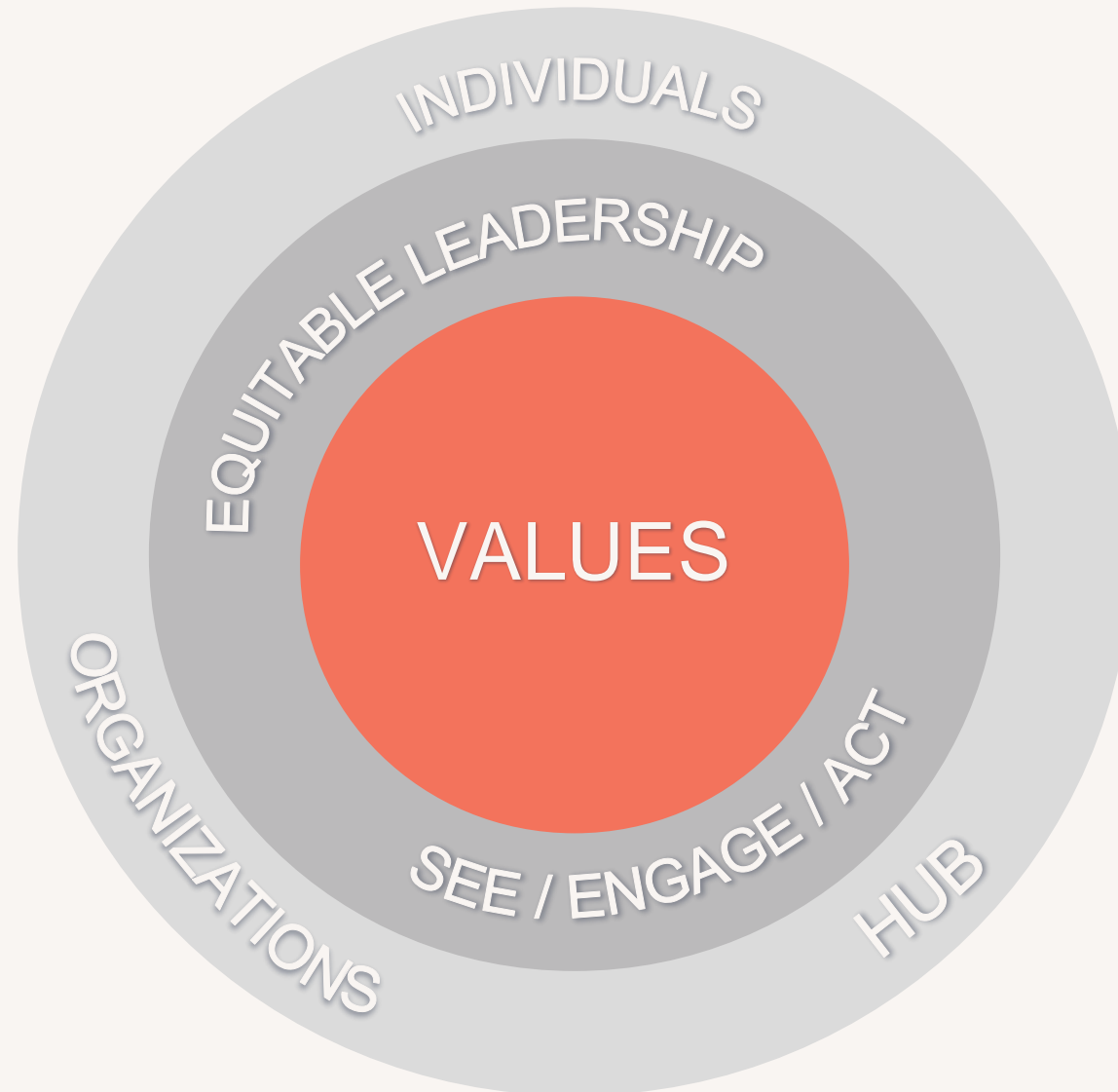
A comprehensive report complements this presentation, provides additional details and can be found [here](#). (will be available in the near future)



# Infrastructure and Plan



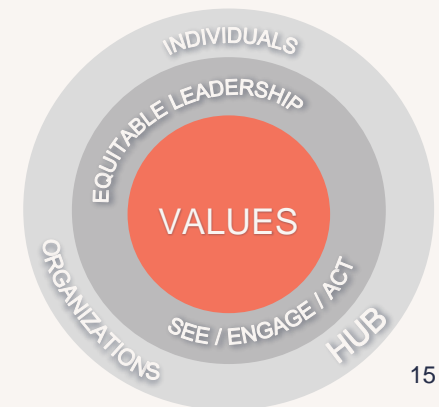
# The Core of the Infrastructure



# Values

How we strive to be

- Protect People and the Environment
- Dismantle Injustice
- Challenge Status Quo
- Cultivate Belonging
- Interdependence
- Share Leadership
- Honor and Support Agency
- Dismantle Barriers to Access
- Reflect Community
- Honor Community Agreements



# Community Agreements

Below is a list of the community agreements used by the C4 during the 2020 facilitation efforts. The C4 has adopted these community agreements as part of the C4's infrastructure for all future C4 work.

- Be authentic - speak your truth without blame or judgement
- Listen attentively - with your ears, eyes, and hearts
- Notice moments of discomfort and stay curious
- Be open to the experience and to each other
- WHY am I speaking? Speak first to understand, then to be understood
- Assume positive intent
- Be open to all communication styles
- Think about the impact of your words - beyond intent
- It's okay if you're tired! Climate justice work is long-term. Real life keeps happening and can be distracting to staying present
- Center equity



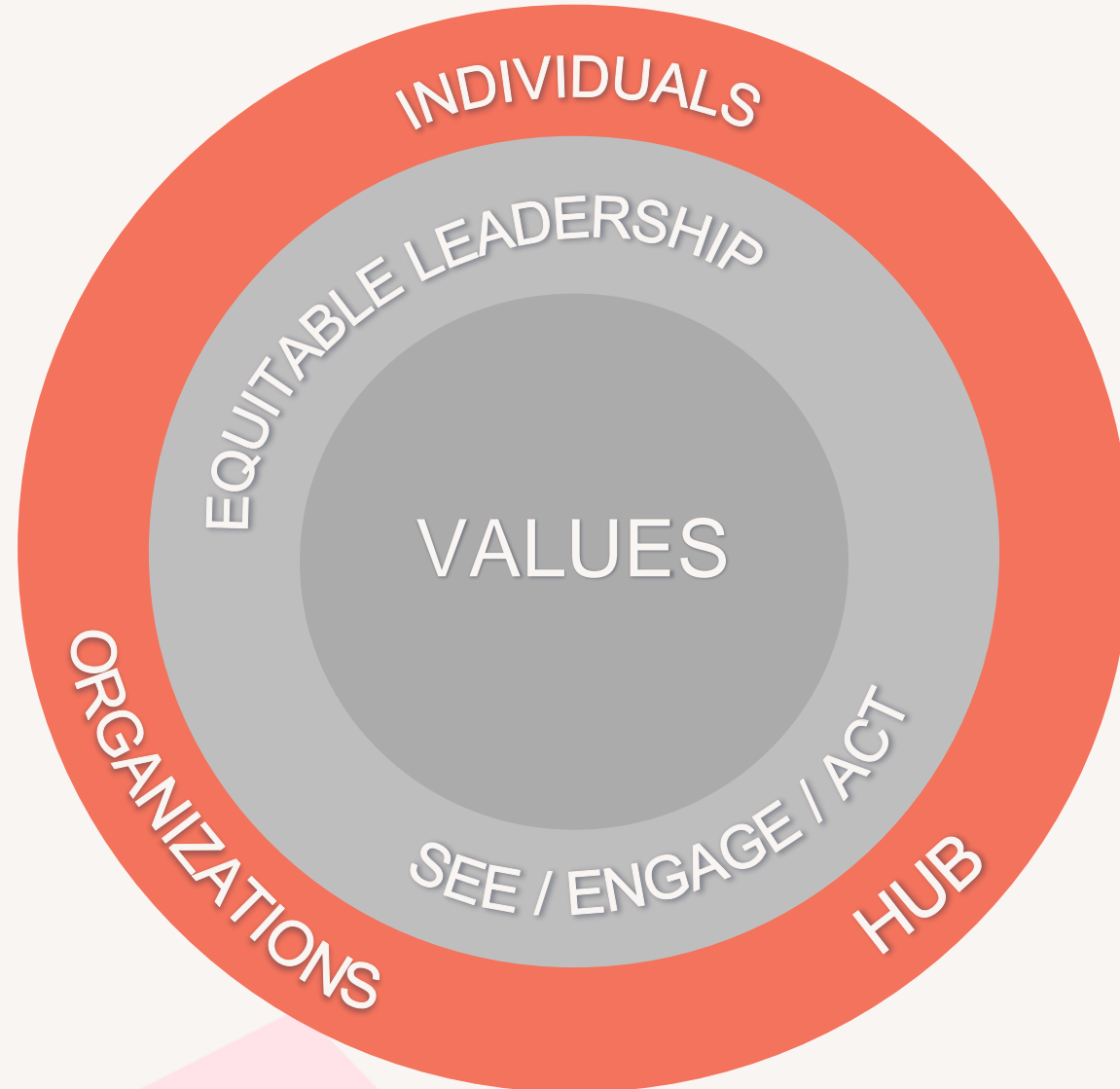
# Leadership Team Governance

- In final development phase, but some current provisions include:
  - Steering Council will be responsible for overall policy, direction, investments, and budgetary decisions
  - Between 11 – 25 people
  - Each participant has one vote
  - Representation:
    - At least 50% BIPOC with representation from Black or African American Community, the Latino/a/x Community, and Native American/Indigenous Community
    - At least 50% with direct connection to social justice work and 50% with direct connection to climate change work
    - 10% or at least 2 youth (<25)
    - At least 60% people who live in Grand Rapids
    - City staff: at least one position
  - Compensation: stipends will be provided to those that identify as BIPOC and/or Youth and for the Executive team
- City's commitment will be defined

# Steering Council

- Alison Waske Sutter, City of Grand Rapids
- Ana Jose, West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (Co-Chair)
- Annabelle Wilkinson, City of Grand Rapids
- Bill Wood, West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC)
- Carissa Patrone, West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum (WMSBF)
- Cheri Holman, U.S. Green Building Council – West Michigan (USGBC-WM)
- Gayle DeBruyn, Kendall College of Art and Design
- Kareem Scales, NAACP Grand Rapids (Co-Chair)
- Kristen Trovillion, Consumers Energy
- Sergio Cira-Reyes, Urban Core Collective (UCC)
- Stephanie Pierce
- Synia E. Gant-Jordan, Grand Rapids African American Task Force and Legacy & Love LLC
- Wende Randall, Kent County Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF)
- *Additional members to be identified*

# The Components of the Infrastructure



# Proposed 3-Year Pilot Plan

2021

- Hire Project Manager
- Launch Leadership Team
- Hire Ambassadors
- Recruit Collaborative Partners
- Map Resources
- Create a Communications Strategy
- Develop Website



2022

- Support Cohort Campaigns and Mini-Grants
- Launch a Grant Support Platform
- Create Storytelling Collection
- Lead Engagement for Development of a Community Based Climate Action and Adaptation Plan



2023

- Co-create a Community Climate Action and Adaptation Plan
- Create a Long-Term Sustainability Plan for the C4
- Evaluate C4 Program including Iterative Campaign Needs and Potential Redevelopment



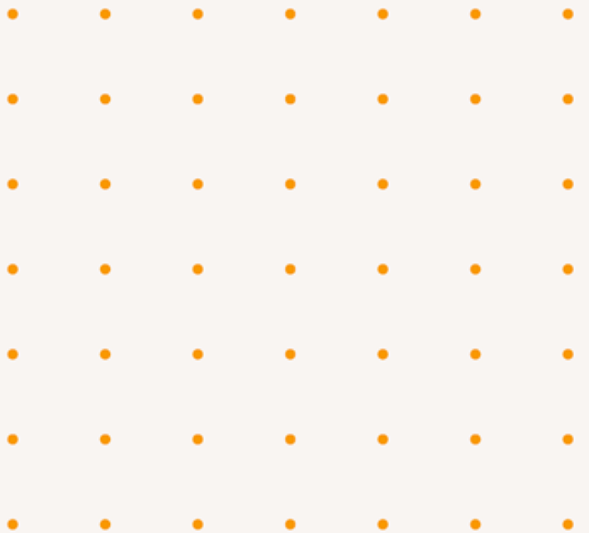
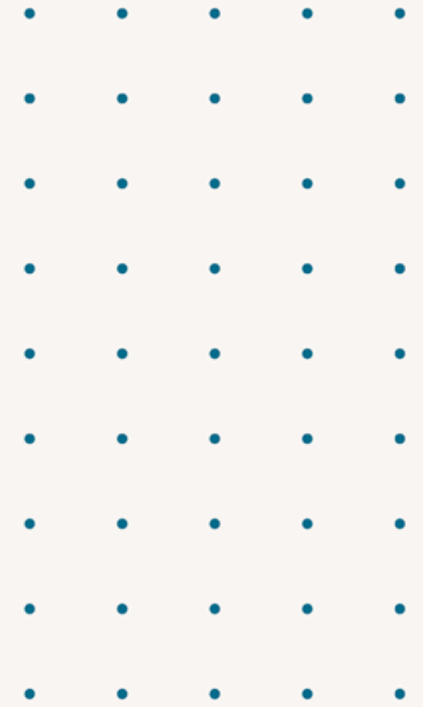
Influence the Grand Rapids Master Planning process; connect individuals and organizations to available trainings; provide professional development for project manager, leadership team and ambassadors; foster connections to support job placement and workforce development; evaluate C4 performance and desired outcomes; facilitate cross-sector networking and collaboration.

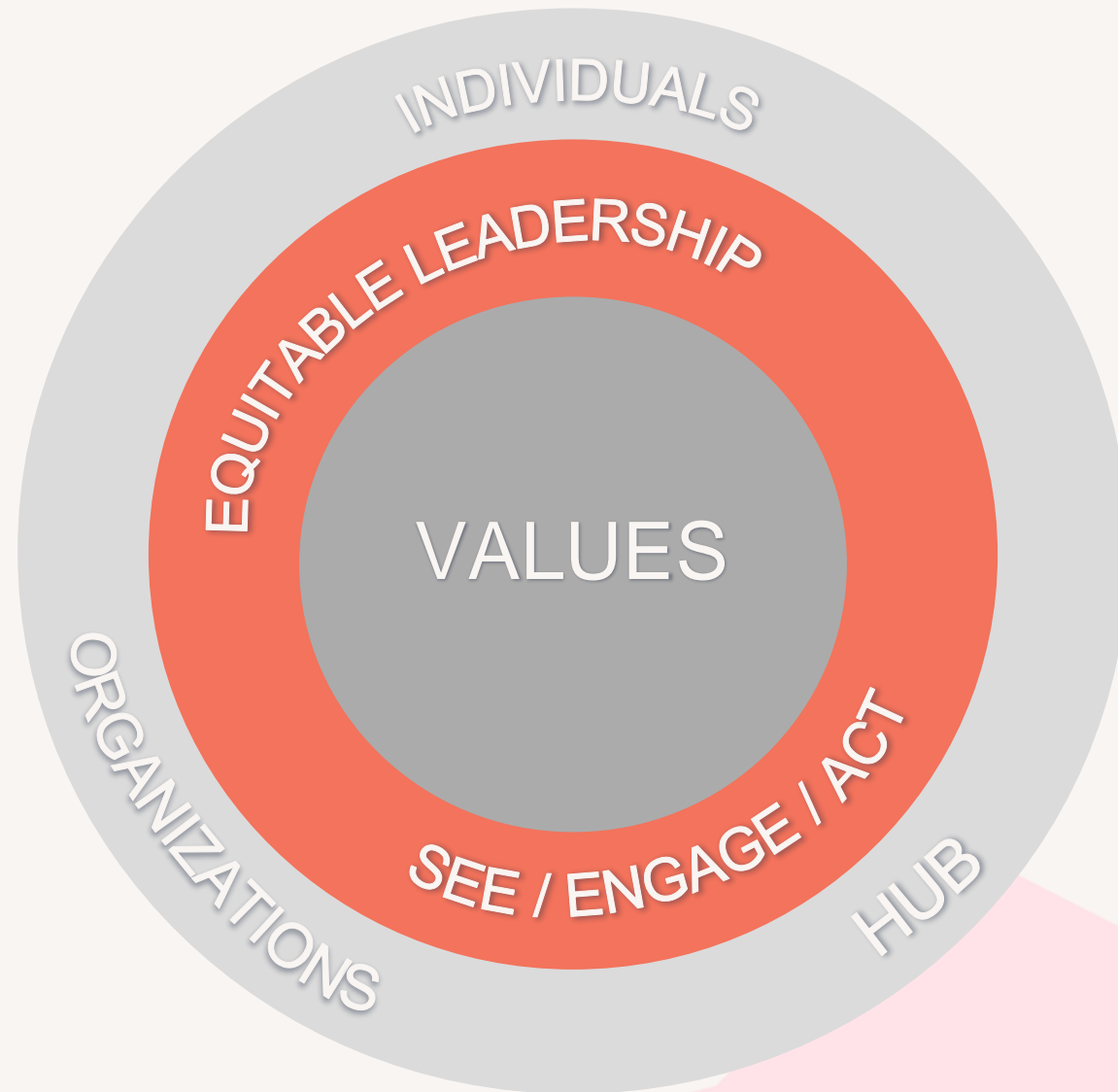
# Key Budget Items

## (Estimated at \$900,000 over 3 years)

- Full-time Project Manager with benefits (\$55,000/year)
- Community Ambassadors (possibly 25 people at 10 hours/month at \$18/hour - \$54,000/year)
- Leadership Team stipends (\$30,000/year)
- Professional development for Manager, Leadership Team and Ambassadors (\$32,500 over 3 years)
- BIPOC specific events (\$60,000 over 3 years)
- Widespread community events (\$40,000 over 3 years)
- Equity, Climate Change and/or Environmental/Climate Justice training for individuals and organizations (\$190,000 over 3 years)
- Mini-grants for Local Community Campaigns (\$105,000 over 3 years)
- Administration (\$35,000 over 3 years)

# Process





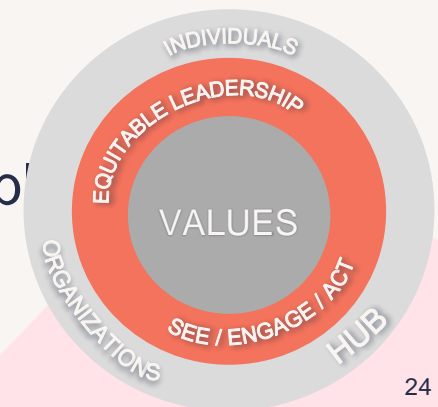
# Process: Equitable Leadership

## How we strive to lead

### Hero to Host:

Shared leadership is built from a process that plays host to the new leaders. Providing the resources and access necessary for new leaders to grow. We have identified actions that can be taken to cultivate this process, moving from a historically hero mentality to a host mentality.

- Provide equitable conditions
- Provide time
- Insist on learning
- Offer support
- Recruit and authentically engage BIPOC leaders
- Reduce bureaucracy
- Reflect back
- Defend the team
- Make achievements visible
- Value conviviality





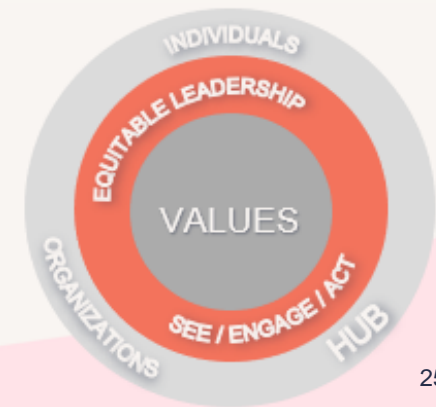
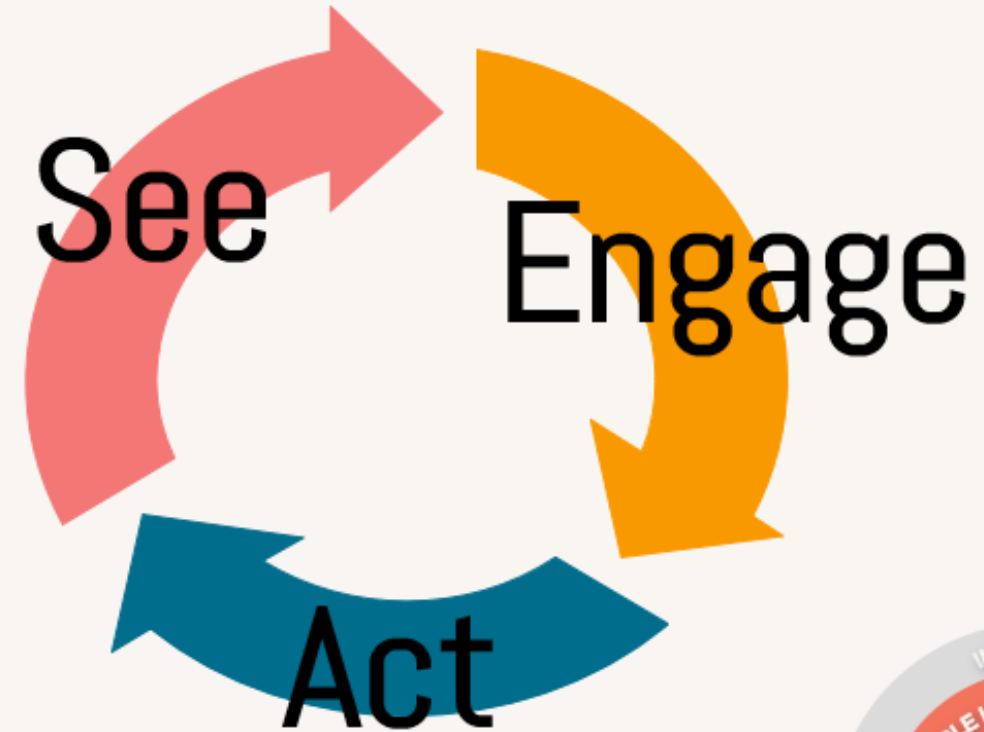
# Process: See/Engage/Act

How we strive to take action

See - How we perceive the world and practice self-awareness

Engage: How we “show up” and engage relationally; how we listen, build relationships and create strong new processes for complex work

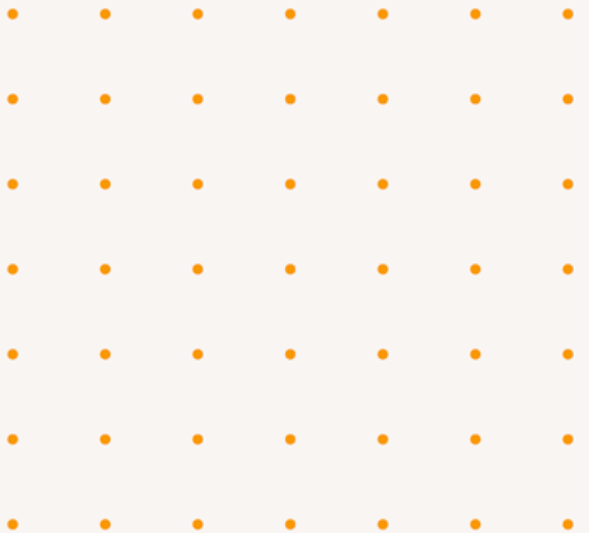
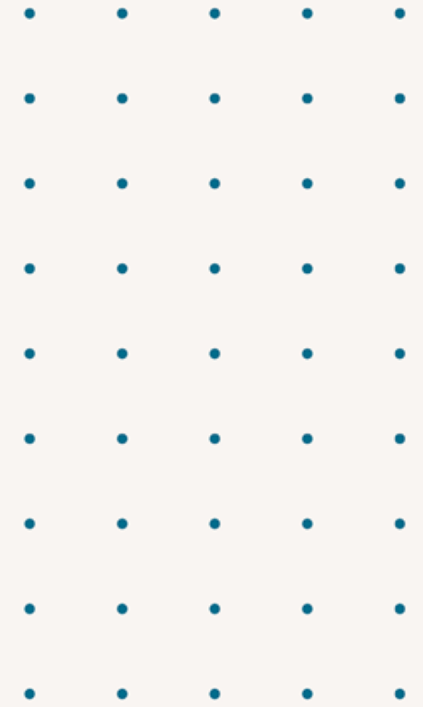
Act: How we design, decide, implement, learn; how we influence direction, bring focus to action, engage in safe-to-fail experiments



# Iterative Process

- The plan is not etched in stone and will be revised as needed by the Project Manager, Leadership Team, Ambassadors and participants
- While the infrastructure is formalized, including the values, community agreements, vision and Leadership Team governing principles, the Planning Team intentionally built in space to provide agency to those that will be participating over the next three years
- To authentically engage BIPOC and white dominant grassroots environmental organizations, participants need to be prepared and committed to evolve over time in partnership and this will undoubtedly result in refinements to the plan and process

# Lessons Learned



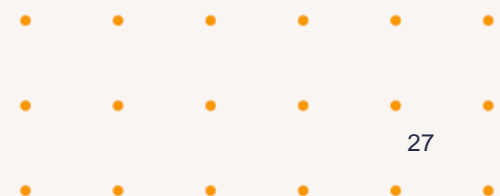
# Lessons Learned

1

Slow down to make sure the process is the most equitable it can be. Often white dominant culture is focused on identifying quick outcomes and meeting arbitrarily identified deadlines. Focusing on the process may be difficult, but it is the most important way to move forward equitably.

2

Ensure the right people are at the table from the beginning. In our second phase of the C4 Planning Team, we were able to increase the representation of BIPOC voices. However, having already begun brainstorming in our first phase, our newer team members were left out of those conversations.



# Lessons Learned

3

Prepare for, encourage and create space for uncomfortable conversations. The uncomfortable conversations during the C4 Planning Team's meetings were always the ones that we most needed to have. It is because of those difficult conversations that trust and relationships grew within the team.

4

Identify and share structural and institutional barriers with stakeholders. This has come up mostly in our fundraising efforts. As we are working with community-based organizations, sometimes a funder's process is inaccessible, so identify those barriers and communicate them with foundations and stakeholders.

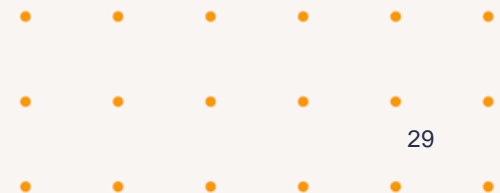
# Lessons Learned

## 5

Be transparent. During our second phase of the C4 Planning Team some members had lower participation, and most of these members were BIPOC participants. While the extenuating circumstances of COVID-19 likely contributed to this outcome, as we saw job displacement from at least a few of the members on our team, there is an important question to be asked here. Was there something in our process that did not provide a safe, accessible or inspiring space for some BIPOC participants to engage? Being more transparent with this issue moving forward is something we hope to work toward as we seek feedback.

## 6

Acknowledge the complexity of the problem and process and develop multiple methods for communicating them. Our C4 journey is rich and complex and we need to streamline how, when, where and with whom we explain this journey. Our team members have been on this journey for the last year and a half and experienced the important nuances. Helping others understand our journey, process and outcomes to come alongside of us in this journey is critical.



# The Promise of C4

The C4 Planning Team took the time to build trust and solid relationships. This project has the potential to affect the entire Grand Rapids community, by serving as a facilitator and mediator of partnerships, of education, and of consensus building, as well as creating the space for a robust climate justice movement in our community. With proper support and community involvement, C4 will provide spaces for partners and residents to engage, resolve conflicts, build strategies, share resources, align vision, and most importantly shift the focus of environmental work to be more equitable.

In addition, an ongoing challenge and opportunity at the City of Grand Rapids is how to effectively, respectfully, and wholly engage community members into City planning processes, strategy-making, and program development. The C4 Planning Team offers a piloted example of community stakeholder engagement that centers representation, equal opportunity decision-making, and relational trust building for the committee members throughout the planning and training process. The model of planning, trust-development, and shared decision-making with a community planning committee alongside City of Grand Rapids leadership is a repeatable model that may warrant more buy-in, stronger community relationships, and provide an opportunity to create programming that will address intended outcomes.

# Who can be involved, how and when?

You. The plan is designed to be inclusive of companies, organizations, and individuals, including youth, who are committed to achieving the C4's vision through the established values, community agreements and Leadership Team governance.

- C4 Leadership Team. Community Ambassador. C4 Project Manager. Organizer. Spokesperson. Activist. Participant. Observer. Avenues for engagement include both individual and organizational.

- The C4 Leadership Team and Project Manager will be established and hired by summer of 2021 and will communicate tentative timelines for individual and organizational participation.



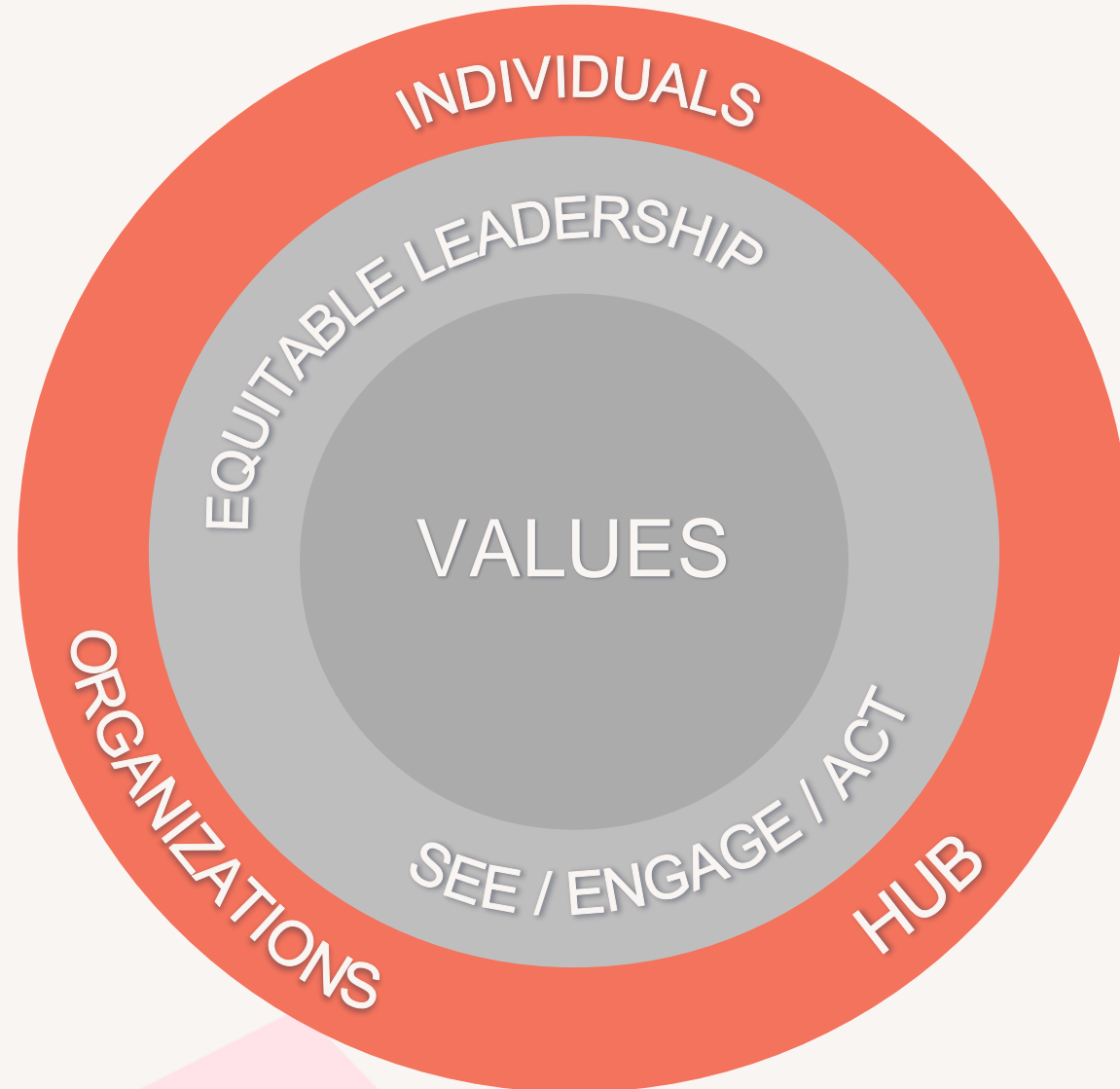
# Fundraising Update


- Awarded \$500,000 from the Wege Foundation
  - Contingent on raising the remaining funds (\$359,662) from original budget
- Consumers Energy Foundation awarded \$120,000
- Working with Michigan Black Expo and Hispanic Center of West Michigan to serve as grant recipients/fiduciaries
- Considering a couple of other applications
- Would like to launch by July



Q&A

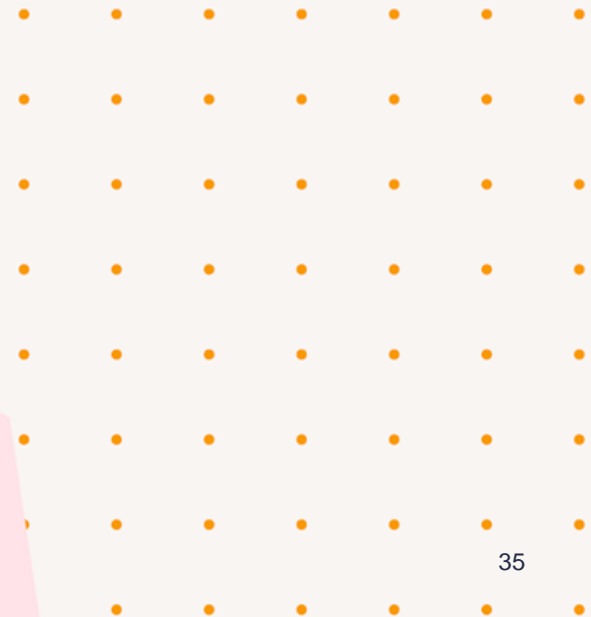
# The Components of the Infrastructure





“Design, done well is a fully integrated process that practices community co-creation methodologies. The Community Collaboration on Climate Change has been working to build trust and bridge neighborhoods to re-design our systems and connect our community so that together we will define and meet our goals for Climate Equity and Action!”

-Gayle DeBruyn – Professor, KCAD & C4 Planning Team Member



# Individual

Developing leaders

## Unlock resources

Individuals offer their lived experience, connection to place, community knowledge  
C4 offers funding, technical resources, access to leaders, and opportunities for shared leadership

## What will get done

Continuously developing leadership within the community will provide the opportunity for self-determination, small-scale campaigns, and increasing the amount of trained climate justice activists in Grand Rapids.

## How it will get done

Hire cohorts of 6-12 people every 6-12 months from neighborhoods of focus to receive training and organize a neighborhood campaign. Option to embed individuals into C4 partner organization work space.



# Organizational

Growing collaboration

## Unlock resources

- Participating organizations offer deep institutional and subject knowledge, already engaged stakeholders, and established networks

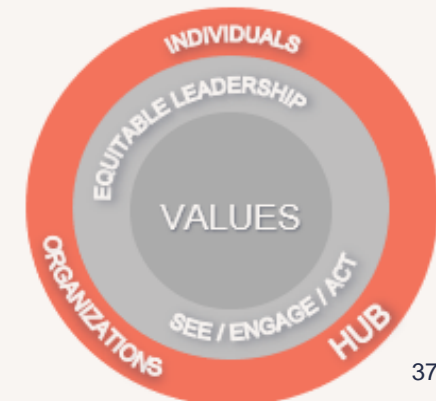
C4 offers mission alignment across networks, larger buy-in, resource hub, and personnel

## What will get done

Prioritization of issues, deep listening, identification of gaps in the work, community goal setting, sharing knowledge, and fund distribution

## How it will get done

Regular gatherings, commitment to values, regular reporting, scoring metrics for issues, committing to see/engage/act process in programming, commitment to transparency



# C4 Hub

Creating and sharing resources

## Unlock resources

Individuals and organizations offer their lived experience, subject matter expertise, and access to their networks. Organization leaders need space for relationship building and resource-sharing.

C4 offers to facilitate learning to review, organize, publish resources and trainings in accessible formats in alignment with set priorities, create space for learning, and facilitate network creation.

## What will get done

Online resource, design charrettes, in-person meetings, training, resource sharing... stuff that generates learning and networking.

## How it will get done

Project Manager directed, grant funded, housed in TBD

